Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues

Annual Report

April 1, 1987 - March 31, 1988

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September 1988

Honourable Elaine McCoy
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
104 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Ms. McCoy:

I am pleased to present you with the Second Annual Report of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, for the fiscal year April 1, 1987 to March 31, 1988.

This report covers the activities and operations of the Council during this period.

It also contains a summary of the Council's recommendations made to the provincial government in the last fiscal year, on behalf of Alberta women.

Yours truly,

Margaret Leahey
Chairperson
Alberta Advisory Council
on Women's Issues

Chairperson's Report

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues has been in operation for 16 months. Although still a young body, the Council's maturing process has been significant and meaningful. Objectives are being accomplished in spite of a lack of resources, funding and staffing. As Chairperson, I am grateful for the assistance and dedication of the qualified and caring associates who work with me in the Edmonton office. Although there are only three full time positions including my own, we continue to initiate and implement policies and programs approved by the Council, fulfilling our legislated mandate.

For all of us, the results being achieved reflect our commitment as a Council to work hard for the women of Alberta. The past year has certainly been a productive one.

We have met with groups throughout the province, served on committees, participated in numerous conferences, provided resource information and material to the public, and conducted extensive research.

The Council, in fulfilling its fundamental responsibility, presented the Alberta government with a series of recommendations in October of 1987. These 20 recommendations were developed after extensive research and consultation with individual women and women's organizations throughout the province.

Some of the issues that deeply concern Alberta women are quality child care, health and family violence. The Council chose to focus its first recommendations in these areas. Other recommendations were made regarding pay equity, the minimum wage, and Native, immigrant and visible minority women.

Another one of the Council's main objectives is increased public awareness on issues of concern to women. To this end, the Council, working in conjunction with several organizations and government departments, spearheaded a workshop on Personal Safety and Sexual Assault. This workshop examined crimes of violence against women and provided those in attendance with valuable information on safety and protection. Professionals explained

methods of prevention, and also detailed treatment available and potential legal action women may utilize following an attack.

Effective communication and consultation with Alberta women continues to be a top priority. In order to reflect the needs and concerns of Alberta women, the Council has continued to hold public meetings in different regions of the province. This year, we visited Grande Prairie and Lethbridge, in addition to the regular business meetings which the Council held. Furthermore, through our Newsletter, and in informal meetings with groups and individuals throughout the province, we encourage women to contact our office and let us know what issues they believe the government should be addressing. This information permits the Council to identify and prioritize women's concerns.

As it enters its second full year of operation the Council will continue to examine issues of importance to the women of this province. The development of comprehensive discussion papers on midwifery, the family, and new reproductive technologies will be major activities of the Council in the coming year. Government programs which will be reviewed include the Maintenance Enforcement Program, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, and re-training programs.

I look forward to another exciting and challenging year as the Chairperson of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

Sincerely,

Margaret Leahey
Chairperson
Alberta Advisory Council
on Women's Issues

COUNCIL'S MANDATE

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues was officially established as a result of Bill 19, an Act of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, in November of 1986.

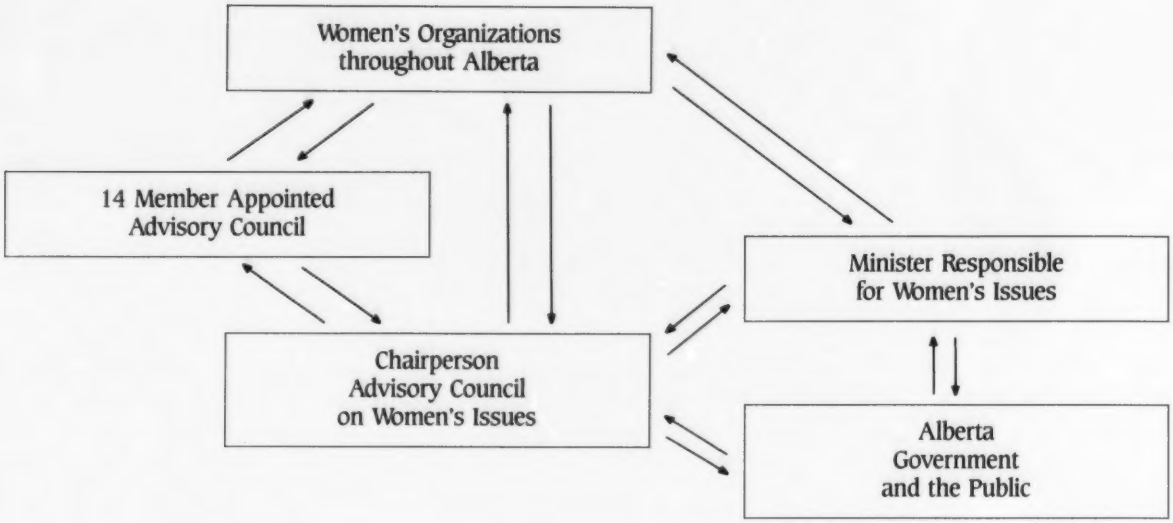
According to the Act, "the purpose of the Advisory Council is to advise and report to the Alberta government through the Minister on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of Alberta women in the life of the province by

(a) identifying specific matters and issues relating to women that may be addressed by the government,
(b) making recommendations to the government with respect to any matters and issues relating to women,
(c) consulting with and providing information to the public, and
(d) carrying out any other activities that the Minister considers appropriate."

The Alberta government was the first western province to give its Council its own Act, placing the 15-member Council on a firm legislative foundation.

Today, the Council advises, reports, conducts research, and makes recommendations to the Alberta government on matters relating to women. As well, Alberta women increasingly call upon the Council for help in areas such as women's legal rights, employment problems, and health concerns. The Chairperson acts as the Council's Chief Executive Officer. As the primary administrator for the Council, Ms. Margaret Leahey operates the Council's office at Highfield Place in downtown Edmonton. Despite limited financial resources and with only three permanent staff positions including the Chairperson's, much is accomplished at the Council office on behalf of Alberta women. The office conducts extensive research, produces numerous publications, acts as a center for communications/networking, provides up-to-date information on women's issues, and offers directional assistance to women who need to access social or other programs. Office staff also receive input from women on problems and concerns they would like to see the government address.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION


Women's Organizations throughout Alberta
14 Member Appointed Advisory Council
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
Chairperson Advisory Council on Women's Issues
Alberta Government and the Public

THE ALBERTA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES 1987-88

Chairperson - Margaret Leahey

Edmonton
Olga Cylurik
Bernadette Swan

Calgary
Dr. Pam Sidhu
Elva Mertick

Medicine Hat
Lucy Milne

Fort McMurray
Janet Slaughter

Grimshaw
Deanna Sidoruk

Lethbridge
Lori Andreachuk
Leah Waters

Red Deer
Wendy Church

Hobbema
Nancy Louis

Bowden
Hazel Smith

Langdon
Kathryn Habberfield

Spruce Grove
Brigit Hawkins

COUNCIL'S FUNCTION

Special matters and issues relating to Alberta women are identified by the Advisory Council through direct consultation and communication with women's groups and organizations, as well as with individual women in the province.

Once issues are prioritized, they are researched and necessary recommendations are developed and presented to the government for action.

The Council works to maintain an effective liaison with women's groups, organizations and individual Albertans through extensive communication both on a regional and province-wide basis.

Public and government awareness of issues of concern are consistently promoted by the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The following recommendations presented to the Alberta Government in October of 1987 were the result of extensive communication and consultation based on independent research and submissions presented by many concerned groups throughout the province.

Seventeen of the 20 recommendations addressed three main areas of concern: quality day care, health, and family violence.

THE NEED FOR QUALITY DAY CARE

Quality day care has a profound effect on all working parents as well as a lasting impact on their children.

The Council supports the development of a carefully regulated, affordable and accessible child care system in our province. This system would be responsive to the needs of all Albertans, and would maximize the number of alternative forms of day care available to parents.

Ensuring our children receive the finest care available is vital to our future. Alberta's standards relative to staff ratio and maximum group size are among the best in Canada. However, in terms of qualifications for child care workers, Alberta ranks as one of the lowest in the nation.

Albertans are concerned about standards for staff and emergency training, and the monitoring of existing standards. They want information in regard to the adequacy of individual facilities. Albertans have also expressed concern about the remuneration child care workers receive. As well,there are questions about the accessibility of quality day care and concern about the lack of alternatives to the ''standard'' day care system. As a result of these concerns, the following recommendations were made to the Alberta Government by the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues:

1) That provisions be added to the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act, and Day Care Regulations to specify minimum standards of qualifications for child care workers. The Council recommends as preferred standards the City of Edmonton Out-of School Care Recommended Standards.

2) That these minimum standards be phased in over a period of years such as provided for in the Manitoba Community Child Care Standards Act and Regulations. However, it is recommended that the first aid standards be enacted and implemented immediately.

3) That certification be required for all child care workers in the province and that the Government of Alberta consult with the Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta to establish standards for certification.

4) That a Day Care Staff Qualification Review Committee be established in the Province of Alberta comprised of employees of child care centres, parents, and members of the faculty of colleges and universities who teach child care courses to oversee such qualification standards and to advise the Minister, and to make recommendations regarding such standards, the facilities and the training established therein.

5) That a study be conducted by the Government of Alberta into the government subsidies and grants currently being provided to day care operators, the expenditures of these funds and the possible redirection of these funds to improve staff salaries.

6) That provisions to the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act and Day care Regulations be enacted requiring mandatory spot checks by licensing officers of day care centres at least four times per year; and that the result of such checks be made available to the public by the Government of Alberta upon request and further that the results of such checks be posted at the day care centre in a prominent place for public review.

7) That the Government of Alberta develop cost-effective ways to inform the public of minimum day care facility standards, staff qualifications and functions of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, its address and toll-free number; that a mandatory requirement be enacted requiring day care operators to provide such information to parents enrolling children in day care centres in this province; and that the findings of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee investigations be made public and posted in day care facilities.

8) That the Social Care Facilities Review Committee rate all day care facilities in the province and that this rating be posted at individual day care facilities in this province.

9) That child care directors, parents, licensing officers and child care staff be required to complete an evaluation instrument similar to the Medicine Hat evaluation instrument at least once per year; and that the results be correlated and posted in day care centres in the province.

10) That further research is required into the specific needs of various groups of parents requiring alternative child care choices; that such research be undertaken immediately by the Government of Alberta in consultation with such groups; and that recommendations be developed for suitable practical solutions for immediate implementation.

ALBERTA WOMEN'S HEALTH

After careful study of health care services for women in Alberta, several important considerations arose. Although quality health care services are available to Albertans, the dissemination of information about these services is not consistent throughout the province.

Discussion of health care concerns with individual Alberta women has clearly indicated that a lack of knowledge and information is actually preventing many women and, by extension, their families from benefiting from the services currently offered by the Alberta Government.

Within Alberta, women have identified their major health needs as family planning, sexuality, contraceptive alternatives and information and education on health management (nutrition, fitness, menopause and stress). There is a frustration expressed by many women, and their families, that resources are scattered or inaccessible, and that there is a lack of coordination of resources. There appears to be a duplication of services in some areas while none are available in other regions.

An effective model of health care would allow women and their families access to a coordinated system which supports management of health. Support should be given to those health care programs that promote a model of wellness for women and their families. Inherent in a "wellness" model of health care is the provision of information and opportunities to the community that will affirm and honour individual decisions, ensure accessibility to the system by means of education and coordination of resources, and the promotion of "caring" tasks which support the maintenance and well-being of families.

Women's health issues and developments have an impact on all Albertans. The Council made the following recommendations on women's health to the Alberta government:

1) That the provincial government support the concept of well-women clinics, and make the Women's Health Resource Centre at the Grace Hospital in Calgary a pilot project; and that funding be made available so that this model of providing services to women and their families can be studied.

2) That a combined effort of the Ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care, Ministry of Social Services, and Ministry of Community and Occupational Health be undertaken to alert and educate the public regarding all the resources available, coordinating a provincial directory which would list every existing clinic, office, support group and counselling services, as well as all areas of social, financial and emotional support.

3) That a concerted effort be made to renew negotiations between the Alberta Medical Association and the Alberta Ministry of Hospitals and Medical Care regarding the establishment of an equitable fee for abortion.

4) That sterilization procedures previously covered under the Alberta Health Care Plan be reinstated.

5) That a portion of health care funds be specifically allocated toward community based programs emphasizing health promotion and disease prevention, and counselling with specific allocation to contraceptive counselling and unwanted pregnancy; and that the funding be supportive of services to women and their families after the completion of an unwanted pregnancy, whether the resolution be adoption, keeping the child or abortion.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Council recognizes that the problem of wife-battering in Alberta is common to all women regardless of age, social, cultural or economic differences. It is estimated that one in every nine women in Alberta experiences physical abuse in a relationship.

The position of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues is that an all out campaign against family violence must be undertaken by the provincial government.

The Council commends the efforts to date of the Alberta Government, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, individual shelters and their employees, service clubs, community centres, and literally thousands of individuals within our province, to combat this problem.

However, emergency shelters serve only as a "band-aid" measure and do not combat the root causes of violence. All Albertans have a responsibility to become informed so that attitudes can change and become part of the overall solution.

Therefore, the Council recommended the following action to the Alberta Government:

1) That an all-out attack on family violence be undertaken by the provincial government, with a public awareness program focusing on the nature and extent of family violence as it relates to all ages, and socio-economic and cultural groups in Alberta. This campaign would be developed with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and the Alberta Office for the Prevention of Family Violence.

2) That a province-wide toll-free help line be established to provide access to all forms of assistance to those in crisis situations, and that this help line be promoted in conjunction with the public awareness campaign.

PAY EQUITY

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues has received various submissions from Albertans on the issues of Pay Equity. The Council recognizes that within this province there is a general lack of public understanding and knowledge on the advantages and disadvantages of pay equity.

It is therefore recommended that an extensive and comprehensive public study on pay equity, and its effects and implications, be conducted by the provincial government.

MINIMUM WAGE

Concerns have been expressed to the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues with regard to the level of the minimum wage in Alberta. It is the lowest in Canada. Further, the service industry is characterized by minimum wage jobs and part-time jobs. In 1985, 72.6 per cent of all part-time workers in Alberta were women; 58.1 per cent of all service persons are women.

Therefore, the council supports the Minister of Labour in his effort to increase the province's minimum wage.

NATIVE, IMMIGRANT AND VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues also recommended that the provincial government continue its support of Native, immigrant and visible minority women's programs.

Many of the recommendations made elsewhere in the Council's October 1987 recommendations reflect priority concerns expressed by Native, immigrant and visible minority women. The Council will continue to monitor the actions of the government in consideration of further recommendations to be made in this area.

REGIONAL CONSULTATION

PUBLIC MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues scheduled a series of public meetings throughout the province as part of the regional consultation process. Although Council members represent Alberta geographically, public meetings allow an opportunity for direct input to the Council on the local level by organizations and individuals throughout Alberta.

The Council held public meetings at the Pavilion, Muskoseepi Park in Grande Prairie in June of 1987 and at the Yates Memorial Centre in Lethbridge in February of 1988. The first public meeting was in Calgary in March of 1987, and the fourth is scheduled for Edmonton in May of 1988.

The focus of the Grande Prairie meeting was "Women and the Economy". Fifteen oral and written briefs were presented to the Council. These briefs were studied and formed part of the October 1987 recommendations to the Alberta Government. Women from Grande Prairie, Peace River, Grimshaw, Sexsmith and Edmonton attended the meeting.

Women from Lethbridge and area presented 18 written and oral submissions to the Council. The topics were wide-ranging and included child care, health, immigrant and visible minority women's issues, education and economics.

Reports on public input received at these meetings were prepared and presented to the Government of Alberta.

BUSINESS MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

June 11th & 12th, 1987 - The fourth business meeting of Council involved extensive committee work on issues of concern as identified to the Council. Work focused on women's health, including medicare cuts and abortion; quality day care; family violence; and economic related issues.

SEPTEMBER 18th & 19th, 1987 - The fifth business meeting of Council involved Council discussion on draft recommendations to be presented to the Alberta government. Priority issues included quality day care, women's health, family violence, pay equity and minimum wage.

FEBRUARY 25th & 26th, 1988 - The sixth business meeting of Council was held in Lethbridge and involved Council discussion on potential recommendations to be drafted and presented to the Alberta Government. Discussion focused on such issues as universal accessibility of quality English as a Second Language Training Programs (ESL); Recognition of Foreign Credentials; Non-traditional Careers and Apprenticeship; Special Counselling Programs; Funding of Women's Shelters; Linguistic Support to Women's Shelters; Resource Materials on Family Violence; Native education and the Alberta Widow's Pension Program.

Council members also discussed the concept of Community Resource Networks, as proposed by the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

SPECIAL MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

In March of 1988 members of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues met with Hospitals and Medical Care Minister Marv Moore, Social Services Minister Connie Osterman, and Community and Occupational Health Minister Jim Dinning regarding Council's concern with medicare cuts, particularly as they related to birth control and sterilization procedures. Council called on the government to re-insure these procedures.

Council also consulted with U.S. Trade official William Merkin regarding women and the Free Trade agreement between Canada and the United States.

COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS SEMINAR

In conjunction with provincial and community experts, the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues spearheaded a public seminar and forum on personal safety and sexual assault in June, 1987. The goal of the seminar/forum was to increase awareness of issues related to sexual assault.

The day-long seminar, held at the Edmonton Convention Centre, was comprised of four separate workshops and a public forum.

Key participants included Assistant Commissioner G.J. Greig, Commanding Officer of Alberta's RCMP "K" Division, and members of the Force; Edmonton Police Chief Leroy Chahley and members of the Department; Jane Karsteadt, Executive Director, and staff of the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton; as well as representatives from the Alberta departments of Attorney General and Solicitor General; and the Federal department of the Solicitor General.

The legal workshop provided information on the laws governing the crime of sexual assault (detailing the changes made to the Criminal Code of Canada in 1983), and the role of police investigators and the courts.

An overview of statistics relating to sexual assault and the crime trends was presented in the workshop called Preventing Sexual Assault: The Need For Awareness. Participants discussed the role of the media in increasing awareness of sexual assault, provided realistic scenarios to reinforce the need for security in a variety of environments, and gave advice on confrontational situations through role play.

The Victim's Needs And Services Workshop focused on four areas: myths about sexual assault, the Rape Trauma Syndrome, the needs of the survivor of sexual assault, and services available to the victim.

The men's role workshop examined the causes behind the violent behaviour of men, and provided information to men on what they can do to help women they know who have been sexually assaulted.

The public forum provided those in the audience with an opportunity to ask questions of, and express concerns to, the key participants of the seminar.

Input received from the forum included:
- concern with the apathy perceived to exist in society regarding the issue of sexual assault;
- concern regarding the quality and quantity of counselling services available to victims and rehabilitative services available to offenders;
- concern regarding the welfare of children who are sexually assaulted;
- calls for province-wide, regulated and professionally staffed courses in self-defence; and
- appreciation for the seminar and information provided on preventive techniques.

COUNCIL RESEARCH

Extensive research (national, inter-provincial, provincial and local) was conducted by the Council office on priority issues which resulted in the Council's first set of 20 recommendations to government in October 1987. In addition, specific projects included: midwifery, women's health (including abortions), economics, day care, immigrant women and Native women. This research helped ensure that recommendations presented to government were reflective of the needs and concerns of Alberta women.

COUNCIL OFFICE

To date the Council office has received thousands of telephone calls, letters and submissions addressing diverse issues such as abortion, medicare cuts, economic equality, family violence, the closure of Hilltop House, widow's pension, and quality child care. Staff members provide an information and referral source to women seeking help on specific programs or services. Close to 600 Albertans have visited the Council office in the past year. A library developed by the Council provides resource material to the public. The Council office also distributes newsletters, brochures, and other materials to Albertans across the province.

COUNCIL OPEN HOUSE

COUNCIL CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Over 300 Edmonton and area women celebrated International Women's Day with members of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. The public 'celebration' took place at the Council's office in Edmonton.

The Open House was held March 8, 1987, to coincide with International Women's Day - a day of celebration recognized world-wide since 1910. Representatives of women's organizations, community and ethnic groups, educational and health-care institutions, law enforcement agencies, and government departments were in attendance.

Elaine McCoy, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, was one of several cabinet ministers and MLAs who attended.

The Open House celebration provided the public with an opportunity to learn more about the role and purpose of the Advisory Council and various Council activities, to meet Council members, to exchange ideas and information, and to participate in an informal dialogue on women's issues.

Many visitors took the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the Council's library resources and other materials. Videos, dealing with a variety of women's issues, ran continuously during the afternoon.

A special feature of this year's Open House was the "Visions for the Future" student essay project. Submissions from students at M.E.LaZerte High School in Edmonton dealt with such subjects as women in the workforce and paid maternity leave.

COUNCIL PUBLICATIONS

Effective communication between Council and the Alberta public is of prime importance to the Council. The interaction of the Chairperson, Council members and Council staff with Albertans throughout the province is a major element of the open communication and consultation process adopted by Council.

The Council produces discussion papers and background papers on major issues to create public awareness. The papers encourage discussion and debate, and urge women to contact the office with their opinions and ideas on these issues. Brochures and pamphlets examining major issues are also developed and distributed throughout the province, as is the Council's newsletter which is available at no cost to Albertans. The newsletter is known as the ''Council Communique'' and provides detailed information on the Council's activities and projects.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Preparation of 24 additional recommendations for action are underway, and will be presented to the government in June of 1988. These recommendations will cover three major areas: immigrant and visible minority women; Native education and the Alberta Widow's Pension Program.

- A major discussion paper on "Midwifery in Alberta" is scheduled to be released in May of 1988. Extensive work on this paper started during the time period covered by this Annual Report.

- The Council has also instigated a discussion paper and brochure on New Reproductive Technologies (NRTs); a discussion paper on Women and the Family; and a brief to the Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans which will be presented in the fall.

- The Council is also currently examining the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP), and the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Program.

- The concerns of domestic workers in Alberta and the availability and effectiveness of re-entry and re-training programs for women are also being studied by the Council.

- The Advisory Council is planning to sponsor a province-wide symposium on November 5 and 6, 1988 at the Convention Centre in Edmonton on issues of importance to Alberta women. Sixteen seminars/workshops will be offered in four main areas: Women and the Family, Women and Health, Women and Law, and Women and Work. Women from throughout the province will have the opportunity to attend.

ALBERTA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
APRIL 1, 1987 • MARCH 31, 1988

SALARIES	$105,074
BENEFITS	13,333
TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATIONS	39,665
HONORARIA AND CONTRACT EXPENSES	39,108
RENTAL OF EQUIPMENT	7,368
MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	16,345
ADVERTISING	4,984
OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES	2,692
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$228,569